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40 The GAZETTE, Montreal, Wed., Aug. 27, 1975

Jaws' stunning success owed to super hard sell

By VERNON SCOTT of UPI

HOLLYWOOD — Selling a hit movie is an intricate a caper as making the picture in the first place, and almost as fascinating.

Jaws, which surpassed the $100 million box office mark over the weekend, is a textbook example of how the public is inveigled to the theater.

It is earning more than a million dollars a day.

The man principally responsible is Clark Ramsay, vice president in charge of advertising and publicity at Universal Pictures. Thanks in large part to Ramsay, Jaws will soon top the six all-time box office champs: The Godfather, The Sound of Music, Gone With the Wind, The Sting, The Exorcist and Love Story.

It cost Universal $1.8 million in advertising-publicity.

Key to merchandising the film, the story of a great white shark which terrorizes a beach resort, was timing and television. A tremendous advantage, of course, was the pre-sell of Peter Benchley's best-selling novel.

HIT

"Book sales indicated we would have a hit," said Ramsay, a dignified gray-haired man near 60. "But not in our wildest dreams did we imagine it would be this big.

"First we coordinated the graphics of the logo for the paperback edition with our advertising campaign — the picture of the shark rising to devour a girl swimmer.

"The logo came from Bantam Books. It was better than anything we could produce. But I think movies sell more books than vice-versa. Sale of the paperback went way up after the picture came out.

"Film publicity began on the set at Martha's Vineyard. It rolled along for five months with press coverage every day.

"When shooting was over we pinned down the release date. Last September we decided on June. Summer is best for movies. Kids are on vacation. The nature of the film was right for that timing.

"The over-all marketing concept was an effective use of television ads to coincide exactly with wide release of the film.

"We checked the results with normally strong films — Earthquake, The Exorcist and The Sting.

"If you buy enough TV time to be effective the picture must show in many theaters to amortize the cost," he explained. "Television is a good salesman."

The idea was to hit the public hard with TV blurbs and have the movie in theaters nearby for people to see. But Ramsay employed a bold and expensive new wrinkle.

Rather than buy television time over several weeks or months, bit or miss, Ramsay chose a blitzkrieg.

"In January, before any of us had seen the picture, we had enough confidence to buy up spot ads for every prime time show on the air the nights of June 18-19-20, Wednesday through Friday. Only a few were unavailable.

FOCUSED

"We chose not to spread our TV time too thin. We used four 30-second films comprised of clips, minimizing glimpses of the shark to avoid destroying audience suspense.

"Concentration was focused on those three days. The picture opened June 20th in 407 theaters in the United States and Canada."

The result was instantaneous and overwhelming.

"It is King Kong under water," Ramsay said.

"Time Magazine published a cover story on Jaws the same week. A point is reached on all pictures of merit when the press won't run.

"But Jaws became a news event. News keeps breaking about sharks in general and our shark in particular. We have nothing to do with the stories."

Universal publicity director Murray Weissman says he refused hundreds of requests to publicize the mechanical shark used in some scenes.

TURNED DOWN

"I turned down enough editorial and TV space to support any three major films," he said. "We decided early and wisely in the campaign movie-making secrets should remain intact."

Ramsay said, "We want no part of reports of empty beaches. But we were delighted by the number of political cartoonists who used our logo for their panels.

"Now our ads ask how many times people have seen Jaws. We figure about 50 million persons have already seen the picture (a quarter of the U.S. population) and we've played fewer than 500 theaters.

"We won't open abroad until Christmas. We want the picture to have the same chance to gain interest from book sales over there. Whether or not the book is a best seller abroad, Jaws will follow its domestic success because the awareness is already there."

Nazareth: Scottish accents talking of American style.

International influences mark Nazareth's lyricism

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ for The Gazette

Nazareth, the rock quartet playing tonight at Place des Nations, is a perfect example of the internationalism inherent in today's rock scene.

They are part of a mini-wave of world famed rock groups to come out of Scotland (Average White Band and Bay City Rollers being others). Their name comes from a reference to Nazareth in a song by the Canadian group The Band, and they specialize in a bubbling American-flavoured version through the current loud heavy British rock style.

They are enormously popular in Europe, where they recently finished a comprehensive tour, and they arrived in Montreal last weekend to start tuning up for their second Canadian tour. Canadian, not American.

"Some people back home," noted bassist Pete Agnew, "don't realize that a group can do a whole tour of Canada without ever touching the U.S. Some American agents would have you believe there's only three places here you can play but we've found out differently."

Thus, they've been rehearsing at the CEGEP St. Laurent for the past few days before embarking on a tour that takes them across Canada over the next month. They also intend to work out new material for a week or so at Le Studio in Morin Heights, P.Q.

Unlike other purveyors of heavy metal, the members of Nazareth have a cheerful freewheeling countenance. They enjoy a good time on the road, which is why they did not enjoy their four concerts in Yugoslavia.

"Their catch line is that it's just like the West," said Agnew in a hoarse brogue. "But when you get there, it's a different story. At one hall, they wouldn't let us turn off the house lights for our sparkling refracted light number. We compromised. One half of the hall was dark while the other was brightly lit."

The group has a strong following in this city, where the culture shock is remarkable. Imagine the Scottish and French-Canadian accents of the group and the local record company promotion man as they talk about this Anglo-American rock style that's produced albums with titles such as Loud 'n' Proud, Razamanaz and Rampant.

And, furthermore, they get more of a kick out of the advertising jingles on the radio here than the music.

Saturday Night at the Baths just soaked with superficiality

By JULIA MASKOULIS of The Gazette

So what you want in a good piece of action, eh? Well, forget it.

Saturday Night At The Baths (at the Vendome) is not a blue movie. Nor is it an intellectual movie on homosexuality, bisexuality or the sexual dilemmas of our times.

Its aspirations to be a bit of both end in triteness and failure, admirably assisted by a very poor script and even poorer acting.

"Saturday" is filmed entirely on location in New York City's infamous Continental Baths, a posh liberated gay club providing sauna, floor show, gym and disco-club under one roof.

Into this decadent glitter of total homosexuality and lots of bare bottoms bugged by teenie-weenie white towels walks our hero, Michael, a sober lad blessed with an angelically feminine face.

Michael (Robert Aberdeen) looks as though he belongs in that setting and not with his girlfriend - photographer (Susan Shepstall).

ADVANCES

In fact, our straight hero looks more gay than any other gay in the film. It is only a matter of time until nature takes its course and Michael's knees begin to wobble under advances from Scott the stage manager at the Baths (played by Don Scott).

Into this environment abounding with 'Y' towels our hero uncomfortably accepts a job playing piano. In no time a spell of murky uncertainty enters the picture (in good films known as conflict) and Michael experiences a tug-of-war within himself.

His desires — Scott — fighting his upbringing: Back home in Kentucky "the way you treat queers is to punch 'em in the mouth," he says.

Potentially a lot of interesting ideas are raised about homosexuality, circumstance, environment and how all are connected. But this more fascinating aspect is barely followed up at all.

The film totally lacks any redeeming qualities whatsoever. Its understanding of homosexuality is bland and skin-deep. It does not approximate the sensitiveness of The Boys In The Band which exacted a realistic aspect of being gay.

Its claims to understanding bisexuality or sexual maturation or freedom are grossly exaggerated; its treatment of a vastly-relevant subject these days is as superficial as the locale it was filmed in.

However, there are some scenes in the film which shall be noted. One is a reverently funny Monty-Python-type football game between a straight and a gay team. The others are of the nightclub acts at the Baths, a truly fascinating ensemble of female impersonaters (Judy Garland, Shirley Bassey and Diana Ross) and an all-male ballet.

Had director Peter Buckley and producer Steve Ostrow reversed their emphasis, concentrated in exploring the night life of this sub-culture and underplaying the soppy sentimentalism of our hero's conversion, they might have made a film worth seeing.

Baths sequence: Teenie-weenie towels.

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